

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office
FLOOR DEBATE

May 14, 2003

LB 407

SENATOR CUDABACK: Time.

SENATOR JOHNSON: We'll get back to you later. Thank you.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Johnson. (Visitors introduced.) Senator Schrock, on AM1881.

SENATOR SCHROCK: Senator Cudaback, members of the Legislature. For the record, ten years ago, higher education took 22 percent of the state budget. At the present day, it takes 16 percent. So as a percentage of the state budget, higher education is getting a smaller piece of the pie than it ever has. And I wanted to continue my conversation with Senator Wehrbein. Senator Wehrbein, if we do nothing but let the Department of Roads stay the course, is their budget going to increase for 2002-2003, 2004-2005? And how much? Is there any projections on that? And if there isn't, why not?

SENATOR WEHRBEIN: Yes, there is, Senator. We've allocated...and I'm looking for those numbers right off...right now. If you give me...if you want to talk another second, I'll find it.

SENATOR SCHROCK: Well, I guess the thing that bothers me is, as Chair of the Natural Resources Committee, the Department of Natural Resources has taken about an 18 percent cut; the Department of Environmental Quality has been taking a cut; and there's pressure on the livestock industry to come up with more fees that if...to fund their inspection program, which is a burden the livestock industry doesn't need. Game and Parks has taken a cut, and they're...it's been threatened to take away their cigarette money. Now, why does the Department of Roads get by unscathed? And I'm not saying we should take a cut. But maybe we should at least take a look at their increase. I assume they're going to get an increase, because they're...that's sacred ground; it's not supposed to be touched. And as a rural senator who benefits from good roads, I should be the last one talking about this. But I think when you have tough times, you take a look at everything. And I don't...this is not criticism of the Appropriations Committee. I appreciate